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071126Z Sep 05

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 003970

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STATE FOR NEA/ARPI (DBERNS), NEA/PPD (CWHITTLESEY)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KPAO](#) [PREL](#) [KU](#) [KATRINA AID](#)

SUBJECT: TFUSO1: SPECIAL MEDIA REACTION: AMBASSADOR'S
"THANK YOU" FRONT-PAGE NEWS; KUWAITI SUPPORT CONTINUES

Ref: A. 3961

Ref: B. 3957

Ref: C. 3951

1. Summary: Major daily newspapers gave front-page, banner headline coverage to the Ambassador's remarks thanking Kuwait for its generous offer of \$500 million in aid for Hurricane Katrina victims. The remarks came on the heels of a meeting, also widely reported, between the Ambassador and the Acting Speaker of the National Assembly, during which the Ambassador thanked the parliamentarian for his government's support. Kuwaiti writers across the political spectrum continued their chorus of support for Kuwaiti aid to the hurricane victims. End Summary.

"The Biggest Aid Extended in the Entire World"

2. Kuwaiti dailies Al-Watan, Al-Seyassah and Al-Rai Al-Aam carried front-page coverage of the Ambassador's meeting with Acting National Assembly Speaker Abdul Wahab Al-Haroun and his expressions of thanks after the meeting. A banner headline in Al-Watan read: "American Ambassador: Thanks. Kuwaiti Assistance is Enormous." A sub-headline noted that the Ambassador described Kuwait's pledge as "the biggest aid extended by an American ally in the entire world."

3. Coverage in the other papers echoed Al-Watan's coverage. Al-Seyassah reported on its front page that the Ambassador praised Kuwait as a "close ally" and other papers reported Al-Haroun's statements reaffirming the relationship, assuring that the aid was on the way, and reiterating that such assistance was "the least that Kuwait should provide under the circumstances to a friendly people."

"Give Donations to America"

4. Kuwaiti NGOs and columnists continued their near-unanimous support for the Government of Kuwait's pledge. The Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in a widely reported statement, urged Kuwaiti businesses to donate their funds to Hurricane Katrina's victims. Writers from conservative, religious and liberal schools of thought continued their unprecedented call for donations.

5. Writing in Al-Watan on Sept. 7, Conservative Ahmed Al-Fahd, under the headline "Give Donations to America," wrote: "Yes, we agree with the Government of Kuwait for extending financial assistance for America, Russia and China because there is a humanitarian need, especially during the time of natural disasters. This is one of the fundamentals of our religion. We also agree with the principal of assistance, whether we agree or disagree with America's foreign policies. We also distinguish between American policies and the American people who usually do not like to interfere in politics."

6. Writing in Al-Watan on Sept. 7, Khalid Al-Sultan, Chairman of the Traditional Salafi group, wrote: "It is a sensitive issue whether we should offer assistance to the people who engage in wars against us and kill other Muslims. I have consulted with many leading religious scholars on this issue. They have advised me that would be possible to offer assistance to non-Muslim civilians due to the higher interests of Muslim governments and other considerations that serve Islam especially if there are international treaties with those allies. In fact, there are benefits to offering assistance since doing good deeds will give us a 'higher hand.' According to the prophet: 'A higher hand' (offering assistance) is better than 'a lower hand' (not offering assistance.) Offering assistance will also improve relations with stronger countries for the benefit of weaker Muslim countries. It will also create compassion and mercy between people and other nations."

7. Dr. Ayed Al-Manna, board member of the Kuwait Journalists' Association, writing in Al-Watan on Sept. 7, wrote: "The \$500 million is not a small sum for any friendly nation but not enough for a nation like the U.S. Some Kuwaitis have objected not because Kuwaitis are not

generous enough but because the many crises that have befallen Kuwait during the last few years. This has taught Kuwaitis to scrutinize and question their financial assistance and spending with all of its friends and allies. Kuwaitis however, are most grateful to the American brotherly and friendly nation that helped them liberate their country and 'snatch victory from the jaws of defeat' (Or Saddam). The U.S. did not only liberate Kuwait, but also the Iraqis from Saddam on April 9, 2003. Therefore, it is the duty of the Government of Kuwait, as well as the people of Kuwait, to offer financial and moral assistance on all national levels. This is only a small token of friendship since the U.S. was a true friend in real times of need."

18. Writing in Al-Qabas on Sept. 7, Soud Al-Samaka wrote:
"Those who oppose the donations for the Katrina Hurricane are two groups: They are either supporters of Bin Ladin and the Taleban, or the remnants of the Pan-Arab tide of hollow slogans and dictator regimes like Saddam and the like. Our Government is to be applauded for extending financial and moral assistance to the U.S. during its time of need. It is our duty to repay our debt to America from a humanitarian and a moral standpoint. The Government took an honorable and moral stand. This is why it does not concern us who objects to the donations, if they do so as individuals. We call on the Government of Kuwait to stand firm by its decision and not to listen to other voices from Parliament. We also salute the MP's who supported the Donation decision.

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